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## ***Temporal dimensions of reflexive Net-politics: Politicking on the Internet with monsters***

### INTRODUCTION

Our interest is to study emerging individualising political participation and activity on the Internet by analysing Finnish Net-protest campaigning mobilised against gossip journalism in May 2006. We contend that the case provides useful insights into the dynamics, patterns of change and the variety of political activity taking place on the Internet. Methodologically, we combine case material with research literature to build a theoretical framework in which individualising citizen initiated net-politics can be analysed. At first we set the case study in the context of *reflexive politics* (for the definition, see Introduction in this volume) that illustrates conflicts arising from clashes of different subjective values, lifestyles and attitudes. As we understand reflexive politics, it refers both to the politicisation of private worries and issue-specific questions and to political judgement, and to outcomes resulting in action. Therefore the term reflexive politics provides an explanation of intuitively and instinctually emerging modes of politics that unfold in more an organised form of action in the subjective process of political judgement. Secondly, we focus attention on the motivation of the protest refracted through the lens of a *political consumerism* perspective that is a form of reflexive politics. Thirdly, we address the contention that a central form of participation, acting and influencing on reflexive politics is publicness, which helps citizens

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1. Both authors have contributed equally to this chapter

get political issues close to their hearts, and to enter a more general consciousness. The Internet is reviewed as a space of micro-public spheres, through which self-made publicness has become a vital part for both media- and political reality.

From the standpoint of reflexive politics, we also show how the Internet features temporal flow. To identify the Internet-based changes in temporality, we stress that temporal relations of past, present and future are the key elements in making (political) action possible. However, in a computerised environment the passing of objective time is replaced by the experience of subjective time, which extends and crosses traditional boundaries related to space and time. As a consequence, on cyberspace new types of *we*-relations and shared meaning contexts can be constructed; and in differentiated *now*-moments various types of activities may take place. Thus, asymmetric and asynchronous cyber time has an impact on the features of political net-activity that is characteristically more changeable, surprising and innovative than traditional “real world” politics. Our research case gives us an opportunity to study how a fragmented, complex, multi-spatial environment transforms the repertoire and forms of citizen-oriented politics into more individualised ones. It is setting the scene for the emergence of a new type of political presence, subjectivity and interactivity.

#### LORDI-PROTEST AS A PHENOMENON OF REFLEXIVE POLITICS

Our research case as a phenomenon of reflexive politics resulted from a peculiar chain of events, in which we witnessed the political protest that exceptionally related to the Eurovision song contest.<sup>2</sup> Hard-rock band Lordi became a topic of debate, when it won Finland’s Eurovision televote selection in March 2006. It elicited a lot of conservative commentaries in various media. Overall, Lordi’s selection was considered a sacrilege and the band was accused of Satanism. When Lordi performed with their monster costumes in the final of the Eurovision

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2. The Eurovision song contest is a camp-spirited television spectacle, though it features some political aspects. For instance, the contest has been part of a Finnish identity-building project since the 1960’s. The Eurovision song contest has also raised strong patriotic emotions in other geographical “border states”. (Pajala 2006).

song contest on May 20<sup>th</sup> and gained an overwhelming victory, the Lordi-discussion went in totally new directions. After the contest, the leader of the band, Mr. Lordi, made a strong appeal to the media to not publish unmasked photos of the band members. However, they were published within a few days in the European media.

In Finland, after Eurovision, daily newspaper *Aamulehti* was the first to publish Lordi's photo without monster make-up on May 23<sup>rd</sup> (see photo 1). The photo was attached to an article that discussed unmasked Lordi-pictures published abroad. Next in Finland on 24<sup>th</sup> May, *7 päivää* (7 Days)–gossip magazine, produced by the Aller Publishing Company, printed the unmasked photo of Tomi Putansuu (Mr. Lordi) on the cover. On the same day, daily newspaper *Hämeen Sanomat* attached unmasked pictures to a Lordi-article. Furthermore, on 26<sup>th</sup>



**Photo 1.** Tomi Putansuu on the cover of the German Bild-magazine on May 22, 2006. *Aamulehti* (the second largest newspaper in Finland) published the photo.

May *Katso!* (Look!) -gossip magazine, also by the Aller Company, printed the unmasked photos of the rest of the band. (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007a, Wikipedia: Lordi.) In the following analysis we refer to the gossip magazines *7 Days* and *Look!* with English translations. The Finnish print media, in publishing the unmasked photos of national hero Lordi, caused a reflexive shock reaction among citizens, who were swept up in a surge of emotion stemming from the Eurovision song contest victory. People went on the Internet to express their feelings of

disappointment and anger. Suddenly the Lordi-photos were the subject of thousands of raging net-discussions. The online-discussions caused a web-protest emerging from micro-publics and targeting the press. (Digitoday 24.5.2006; Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007a.) The protest ranged from swarming<sup>3</sup> to an individualised collective network employing creative styles of resistance (cf. Arquilla & Ronfeldt 2001, 12-13). The Lordi-campaign was very intensive in many respects although it lasted only a few days at the end of May 2006.

In the Lordi-case, *Boycott 7 Days-magazine* –petition caused the most massive swarming on the Net. The aim of the net-petition was to raise to the level of public discussion what the boundaries of good journalism are in respect of personal privacy. (Boycott 7 Days- magazine.) A covering letter for the petition of *Boycott 7 Days-magazine* published on a website served as a manifesto of the Lordi-campaign:

... [D]espite several appeals from Tomi Putaansuu (Mr Lordi) the magazine published a photo of him without a mask. Such behaviour shows bad judgement on behalf of the magazine, and also a lack of respect toward people's right for privacy. My greatest hope is, that by this petition we would be able to make the media think of the boundaries of good journalistic writing. Even though we have freedom of speech in Finland (most of the time I'm glad for it), we have got to draw a line.

To respect another person is a basic virtue. This article and the showing of a photograph was the decisive act from a magazine that I have always detested. Say no to this kind of news- and money-making.

By this petition I want to bring out, that everything is not acceptable in the actions of the media. May this petition help all those who want to maintain their right to privacy to some extent. Revelations could also be made within the boundaries of good taste.

(*Boycott 7 Days-magazine*. Translated from Finnish.)

3. Arquilla & Ronfeldt (2001, 12) define that “[s]warming occurs when the dispersed units of a network of small (and perhaps some large) forces converge on a target from multiple directions. The overall aim is sustainable pulsing – swarm networks must be able to coalesce rapidly and stealthily on a target, then disperse and redisperse, immediately ready to recombine for a new pulse.”

The number of signatures makes the petition the most important source of the protest rally. It gathered as many as 222 000 signatures in a few days.<sup>4</sup> Due to the enormous number of signatures, it was suspected that they would have been forgeries, but most of the signatures were later proved to be genuine (Helsingin Sanomat 10.6.2006).

In turn, *Boycott Seven*-site pleads for both subscribers of *7 Days* and other readers of *Aller Magazines* to cancel their orders. The site offered links to cancellation of *Aller* magazine subscriptions. It also served as unofficial news agency of the protest by collecting “protest-news” from different media sources. In addition, the site encouraged people to give feedback via links to *Seven*’s online-discussion forum, editorial e-mail petition and web-feedback form. There were also links to the personal contact information of editorial staff, a template on how to refuse direct marketing of *Aller Magazines* and the *Turn the Seven Upside Down*-site.

Before the Eurovision song contest, *Votelordi.org* exhorted European rock fans to vote Lordi to victory. After the contest the site mobilised a culture jamming<sup>5</sup> style of campaign, *Turn the Seven Upside Down*, which was changed to *Turn the Allers Upside Down*, after *Look!* published the picture. In addition to asking citizens to turn over magazines in their selling stands, it also invited them to send photos of their activity in the campaign to Yahoo!’s Flickr site, which offers free space for photo sharing. (*Votelordi.org* .) 153 photos were submitted by the end of May in the *votelordi’s photo* folder (Flickr-votelordi’s photos). The campaign turned out to be successful in launching a snowball-effect and “Lordi-copies” were turned upside down in almost every supermarket, store and kiosk.

Culture jamming also became concrete on the sites of *7 Days* and *Look!*, which were targeted by the virtual sit-ins, or in other words distributed denial of service attacks (IT-viikko 25.5.2006 ). Magazines had several server disruptions during the few days after the photo releases (IT-viikko 26.5.2006). The swarming multitude assembled on

4. The number of signatures is remarkable, when compared to the population of Finland (5, 3 million).

5. Wikipedia defines that “[t]he aim of culture jamming is to create a contrast between corporate or mass media images and the realities or perceived negative side of the corporation or media.” (Wikipedia: Culture Jamming).

the sites of the magazines. Both constant page clicking/reloading and filling the discussion forums and feedback forms blockaded sites' user interfaces. For instance, the discussion forum of *7 Days*, was flooded with about 2000 individual messages on 24<sup>th</sup> May. The next day, the site webmasters made an announcement that forbade both sending messages provoking denial of service attacks and filling the forum with repeated inappropriate messages. The announcement threatened people with IP address tracking and legal acts if they could not follow the new rules. (Digitoday 24.5.2006b.)

The editorial staff of *7 Days* and advertisers of the magazine were also targeted by activists. The magazine had to remove staff's contact information from their site because of the jamming of e-mail-inboxes (MikroPc.net 26.5.2006). However, a Lordi-activist managed to save the extracted contact information to another site, after which it was linked to the Boycott Seven-site. In addition, activists e-mailed advertisers demanding them to immediately cancel their advertising campaigns with the magazine. As a consequence *7 Days* announced their intention of considering legal action against their "stalkers", who, according to the magazine, disrupted private business in illegal ways. (Digitoday 31.5.2006; *ibid.* 30.5.2006a.)

On the subjective level the Lordi-campaign highlights the process of reflexive virtual politicisation that starts from the moment of self-understanding. An individual realises and constructs a particular type of consistent identity where authenticity and autonomy are elements of the integrity (see Heller & Fehér 1988, 42). For many people the victorious hard-rock band stood as a symbol of overcoming obstacles, and hence it was linked to their own personal identity-building process and to strengthening self-esteem (see Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007b, 348). Other like-minded individuals can easily be found on the Internet, and thus the formation of networks is straightforward and easy (Gurak & Logie 2003, 44-45). The birth of political groups within the Internet is contingent and random, but as an instrument it contains an enormous potential for any political movement or actionist network by offering the sense of belonging to people from different parts of the globe (cf. Diani 2000, 397). This particular potentiality of the Net should not be overlooked, because according to influential social movements studies (Melucci & Avritzer 2000, 509) the principle of belonging is

an essential part in the formation of any social or political movement, network, or group.

#### MOTIVATIONAL DRIVES BEHIND THE NET-CAMPAIGN

Even though the intensive Lordi-protest lasted only for few days, it also led to concrete results. Many of the magazine's advertisers<sup>6</sup> recalled ads because of floods of e-mails demanding them to discontinue advertising. Companies feared that negative publicity would affect their business. (Digitoday 26.5.2006b; 26.5.2006c; 31.5.2006; IT-viikko 26.5.2006b.) In the online-discussions a common topic was the cancellation of subscriptions to *Seven Days*. However, a chief editor denied in her notice to commercial partners that the circulation of the magazine would be in decline (Digitoday 30.5.2006). On the basis of civic reaction it seems clear that sales of the "Lordi-edition" were low. It is also known that copies were pulled out in some stores due to customer demand (Wikipedia: 7 päivää). Under public pressure both Aller-magazines, *Seven Days* and *Look!*, had to apologise for publishing Lordi-photos and promised not to release any unmasked photos of the band members without permission (IT-viikko 26.5.2006a). The protest movement succeeded in incurring expense and weakening the brand image of *Seven Days* to such an extent that the magazine wants to forget the whole episode. It has removed Lordi-discussions and the apology of the chief editor from its web-site. (Katajamäki 2006, 87.)

Networking activity offers an ideal form for reflexive do-it-yourself-politicking. People as individuals may express their own ideas, gather support for their own interests and deal with their own worries and concerns. (Bennett 2004, 144-145; cf. Lappalainen; Baringhorst and Rättilä in this volume.) In the Lordi-case individuals made their own choices to act on the Net by signing a petition, jamming web-sites, pressuring journalists and advertisers etc., although they did not personally know each other. Michele Micheletti captures this form of citizen engagement with the concept of *individualized collective*

6. Travellink (a net travel agency), Olvi (a beverage manufacturer) and Dressman (a clothing retail chain) suspended advertising campaigns. Further, Altia (a beverage manufacturer) did not renew its advertising contract.



*action* that characterises different forms of political consumerism. According to Micheletti, the market is an arena for citizen-consumers, where they may act individually or in groups. Personal concerns, responsibility-taking and subjective choices motivate the projects of political consumerism, in which an individual makes some choices; and when others make similar choices based on autonomous, subjective judgements, this activity will bring about more far-reaching effects. A precondition of the accumulation of consumerist conflicts is various public spheres, which enable the emergence of loose networks around politicised issues. (Micheletti 2003, 14-36.)

The creative Lordi-campaign demonstrates that ad hoc-publics on the Net may be crucial for the politicisation of everyday-problems related to consumption. The Net as a tool provides both the spaces and means to publish the political micro-processes, that is to bring out topics that are personally (subjectively) felt to be important and worth promoting. The net also enables horizontal communication and allows people to take on the role of political agents pursuing a self-chosen political agenda on these open and free spaces (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007b, 338). The Lordi-case features an outburst of more carnivalistic modes and forms of net-politics. It presents an alternative, pluralistic many-voiced approach in an attempt to unify the actors who come from different backgrounds (cf. Osterweil 2004, 504).

The Lordi-swarming could be understood as political consumerism in a broad sense (see the Introduction in this volume; cf. Baringhorst in this volume). Practising critical judgment - "*[t]his article and the showing of a photograph was the decisive act from a magazine that I have always detested. Say no to this kind of news- and money-making*" - citizen-consumers politicised the purchase of gossip magazines and the publishing practices of commercialised journalism on the micro-public spheres of the Internet. In general, political consumerism has become more salient on the Internet's public spheres, because individualised citizen politics and engagement with politics have become easier (Garrett 2006, 206; Bennett 2006, 105-107; Baringhorst 2005; Micheletti 2003, 23; Scammell 2000, 354-355) and traditional mass media may also be giving more attention to the net-public spheres (Bennett 2006, 111-112, 118-120; see also Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007a, 134). The individual self-expression, belonging to networks and build-

ing ties in virtual micro-places enable people to transcend the normal limits and constraints of politics (physical, time, place and material resources) beyond the boundaries of any political system (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006).

The virtual civic meetings and acts related to the Lordi protest reflect the individualisation of political participation and action emerging outside the formal organisations/institutions. Collective experience belonging to a networked group emerges when something is conducted together. Even signing a net petition is enough to constitute such an experience. A collectivity - and empowered multitude – arises due to action, and manifests itself in the representation of activity (McDonald 2006, 212-213).

#### VIRTUAL CO-PRESENCE AND TEMPORAL FLOW ON THE NET

The Finnish Lordi-movement shows how issue-specific episodes can politicise in the mediascape. In previously mentioned net-meetings, or discursive jam-sessions, Lordi-citizens opened up an arena, in which they rather soon realised they faced a shared problem, and they developed a free, horizontal, and open space for political action (cf. Garrett 2006, 211; Osterweil 2004, 496). A thoroughly commercialised press was considered as a rude actor who in its greed for earning more profits leaves such questions as people's right for privacy unattended. It is noteworthy that gossip magazines and the notorious *Aller Publishing Company* were attacked by Lordi-activists more intensively than daily newspapers, which managed to avoid the most passionate protest actions. The publication policy of *7 Days* was the main subject on various Finnish online discussion forums after the release of the Lordi-photos. There were flaming debates on justifications to publish the photos and the magazine's self-interest in maximising economic profits. Online discussion forums also spread links and information on forms of action that were considered useful in protesting about the gossip magazines and the *Aller Company*.

From the de-medialised point of view, the crossing of spheres can be facilitated by computer-mediated communication, enter-button or mouse-clicking. The public deliberations of the micro sphere

may even enter the macro-sphere by bringing about a "snowball-effect" which means the acceleration and accumulation of intensity of a controversial issue. Such a feature of the Internet has been taken advantage of in many politicised conflicts.<sup>7</sup> The capability of political communication to permeate the levels of public spheres also brings forth the question of the communication tactics of reflexive politics (cf. Meikle 2002, 121). Computer-mediated communication enables the offering of information on a more individualised basis, exploiting time and opportunities and targeting special groups, which are vital to the forms of reflexive politics founding their activity on horizontal communication. The Lordi-case manifests in detail the strengthened power of narrowcasting in relation to broadcasting in today's citizen-oriented politics. Magazines were blamed for infringing subjective values and the personal right to privacy. The reason *Seven Days* was the main target of the campaign shows that for many people the magazine represented the most unpleasant features of gossip journalism (see Boycott 7 Days-magazine).

The whole protest was initiated by citizens, and it proceeded self-reflexively through on-line forums from person to person, from below and horizontally. As an interactive media the Internet could challenge and on some occasions even replace the centralised (and sometimes controlled or else censored) mass media by offering independent alternative information about the world's events (for this, see Paltemaa in this volume). As a channel of participation, action or mobilisation, it is going to have a huge impact on the content of the notion of political action (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006).

As the Lordi-protest demonstrates, reflexive DIY-politicking has altered the notion of proper or relevant political activity (cf. Lappalainen; Baringhorst and Rättälä in this volume). It has challenged the traditional (often named institutionalised) political understanding of how and where political activity and participation can emerge (an

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7. Well known cases are among others the emergence of the local struggle of the *Zapatista*-movement as the symbol of Internet resistance (Zapatistas Discussion Group) and the publication of the email exchange of Jonah Peretti (see Baringhorst in this volume) with the sports equipment manufacturer *Nike*. In the latter case an individual consumer brought embarrassment to a multinational company and set-up the company as a target of political criticism with the help of global publicness (*My Nike Media Adventure*)

interesting example of this newly emerged politicisation and politicking is so called net-piratism, see Hintikka in this volume). It has dwindled the old distinction of a left-right-continuum and made it insignificant, as it has done to those dichotomies concerning private versus public-debates. Individual subjective judgments are the corner-stones of reflexive politics, which means an almost infinite growth of personal policymaking in which personal autonomy plays a crucial part. Thus, in some respects, it seems that *personal is still political* in general, *but political is personal* in particular. (Häyhtiö & Rinne 2006; Häyhtiö & Rinne 2007b.) Easy, flexible, and informal access to de-medialised arenas for political involvement is what people are seeking nowadays. In individualised social reality - subjective values, life-style, attitudes, and motives are more and more steering the willingness and scope of political activity and especially the motives of participation. Anybody's attempt to control one's own life will turn into a political process, when the issue gains broader attention and resonates in a public group of likeminded people who are ready and eager to fight for their right to be (subjectively) right (ibid.; cf. Micheletti 2003, 22).

The most intensive phase of the Lordi-protest was at the end of May. In June the different forms of the protest quickly faded away. The last signature on the *Boycott 7 Days*-petition is dated May 28th when signature-collecting was discontinued. The "news" content of the *Boycott Seven*-site was released during the time period of May 24<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup>. The photos of *Turn the Seven Upside Down/Turn the Allers Upside Down*-campaign were not submitted anymore on the *Flickr*-site in June. The online-forums of *Finland24.fi* -site were the most active forums for the Lordi-protest with thousands of comments. The intensity of swarming was clearly distinguished from the discussions in March and June. The attached tables represent the proportion of messages sent to two discussion forums. The information originates from the public statistics of *Finland24.fi*, which registers the volume of discussion openings in the forums (Tables 1-2). One discussion opening may include a myriad of responses. Both online-forums received thousands of messages in May 2006. It is confirmed, that more than 10<sup>7</sup> 000 messages related to the boycott campaign and photo publications were sent to *Finland24.fi* in less than two days between May 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> 2006 (Digitoday 26.5.2006a).

**Table 1.** Finland24.fi →Discussion →Music →Lordi:

Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2006			7065	725	60	37	45	13				

**Table 2.** Finland24.fi→Discussion→Music→Eurovision Song contest:

Year	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2006	93	35	1576	285	5062	108	30	23	13	6		
2005	43	250	16	16	705	11	3	5	3	10	31	5
2004	30	16	17	32	269	8	10	6	5	5	8	10
2002			15	43	96	6						

(Suomi24.fi→Keskustelu→Musiikki→Lordi→Tietoja palstasta ([www-document]));  
 Suomi24.fi→Keskustelu→Musiikki→Euroviisut→Tietoja palstasta ([www-document]).

Individually steered collective meshing creates an actionist network and brings the element of subjectivity into politics. On the Internet the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future may blur, because of the nature of the media. In the real world acting together requires co-presence, i.e. sharing the same space simultaneously in the company of others (Nowak & Biocca 2003, 482). The Internet dislocates space from temporality, and allows people to share the same virtual space without necessarily sharing a real-time co-presence (Zhao 2004, 97). That is to stay in certain places where their *being there* converges but their *now* diverges, as is the case in on-line campaigns and discussions. Computer mediated technology extends both spatial and temporal limits/boundaries of co-presence. On the Internet, there are no objective *nows*, the time is experienced subjectively. Access onto the Net to join the company of others is virtual, and the presence is mediated on the Net. The virtual social realms provide individuals with a chance to establish new kinds of we-relationships in a mutually shared virtual meaning context (ibid. 92). The co-presence might be temporally not-coincidental, i.e. happening objectively in different times. Blurred temporal boundaries make the political action on the Net more fluid with respect to traditional political activity and fits better with the idea that there are no single dominant or objective cleavages causing the

**Table 3\*.** Finland24.fi→Chat →Music→Lordi:25.5.2006 ≈ 10 pm.

Topic	Time										
Are we going to burn tomorrow	22.18	22.19	22.20	22.22	22.23	22.20	22.20	22.21	22.26		
MTV3 ten o'clock news... 10+actions	22.18	22.20	22.22	22.23	22.25	22.25					
To the news	22.19	22.22	22.23	22.25	22.22	22.23	22.25	22.25	22.33	22.23	
CRIMINAL ACTIVITY	22.22	22.23	22.26	22.27							
Petition-site overloaded	22.23	22.24	22.25	22.42	22.47						
Let's make Seven go bankrupt	22.23	22.25	22.25	22.25	22.26	22.27	22.30				
naive people	22.25	22.26	22.28	22.59	22.27	22.29	22.52				
NATIONAL HEROES	22.26	22.28	22.30	22.37	22.28	22.33					
Yeah, a new god has been born	22.26	22.28									
I'M GONNA BURN MYSELF TOMORROW	22.26	22.27	22.28	22.28	22.33	22.29	22.36	22.29	22.32	22.34	22.54
LINK	22.27	22.28	22.28	22.29	22.30	22.30	22.36	22.34			
To those who threatened to burn	22.28	22.30	22.35	22.32	22.32	22.43					
PEOPLE!	22.28	22.31	22.31	22.32	22.33						
That address of the petition	22.29	22.30	22.31								
WHERE DO I GET SEVEN T-SHIRTS?	22.30	22.31	22.33	22.40	22.32	22.37	22.43	22.58			
SEVEN WAS FIRST	22.30	22.31	22.31	22.32	22.34	22.35	22.39	00.19	22.46	22.08	22.07
Yeah right	22.31	22.33									
For real!!!	22.31	22.33	22.35	22.40	22.41						
Great, Seven!	22.31	22.33	22.36	22.33	22.34	22.35	22.44	22.44	22.44		
How to get revenge on the publishers of the photos	22.34	22.43									
NEW CHRIST/ANTICHRIST!!	22.35	22.38	22.38	22.40	22.40	22.41	22.44	22.57			
No ads to the Aller Magazines	22.36	23.23									
Cancel your seven subscription	22.37										
BOYCOTT	22.37	22.41									
Situation at 9 pm.	22.38	22.39	22.40								
Ten points to MTV3!	22.38	22.39	22.40	22.45							
as I told	22.41	22.43	22.47								
Tomorrow I'm gonna cancel my Seven subscription	22.42	22.43	22.44	22.50	22.52	22.55	23.01				
Tomorrow I'm gonna subscribe to Seven	22.43	22.47									
Come on PEOPLE!	22.43	22.45	22.46								
Let's change the World	22.43	22.45	22.46	22.48	23.05	22.47	22.52	22.49	22.50	23.04	
As I told	22.44	22.46	22.51	22.45	22.54						
LORDI'S APPEAL	22.45	22.46	22.49	22.52							
REVENGING TOMORROW?	22.46	22.48									
IT'S GONNA BURN AT SEVEN'S EDITORIAL OFFICE	22.46	22.48	22.50	22.55	23.12	22.59	23.08				
BOYCOTT –Seven magazine !!!	22.46	22.55									

\*Topics of discussion translated from Finnish by the authors.

political conflicts. Rather politicking seems to reflect on and correspond to individual life-styles and so it is an important constitutive element in building political identity (Melucci & Avritzer 2000, 518-519; cf. Bennett 2004, 127).

The following samples from the popular on-line-chat forum Finland24.fi show how the blurred temporal constraints were crossed and polyphonic discussions transformed into a discursive debate being political action *per se*. Addresses, replies, and remarks that constitute the discussion were not taken in the order of normal dialogue, rather they quite randomly preceded and followed each other, and still they somehow managed to mesh around the topic in a sensible manner.

The discussion was intensive and topics were coherent, even though the participants were not in the same spatial and temporal locus. It shows that the Internet as a tool, as well as a virtual space, allows collective action, in which each participant may join in different times and tune their actions in despite of their separate locations.

The Internet as a virtual space radically alters the understanding of how time affects politics by stretching the understanding of the spatial and temporal co-location of two or more individuals (Zhao 2004, 92, 96). Up to now, politics has been considered as an intersubjective social and collective activity which channels the interests of many and organises the pursuit of their own ends. The necessary premise for any joint activity by a multitude of people is simultaneous spatial- temporal co-presence (see *ibid.*, 95; Zhao 2006). Actors must share the same space at the same time in order to show the power of the masses. Demonstrating, mass actions, reclaiming the streets, even voting in a parliament gain their effectiveness from this source. The crucial point here is; co-presence shapes both the lines and places of action. It constitutes a world as a place for politics<sup>8</sup>. This requires, of course, sharing the same place and time and synchronised actions.

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8. According to Hannah Arendt, the world (*Welt*) is constructed through action between actors. In her own vocabulary, this is what she called *inter-est* (between beings). This inter-place separates subjects from each other, and simultaneously enables them to share the same spatial temporal space (Arendt 1958; Parvikko 1996; Segerberg 2005). In this space different interests collide and politics emerges through the clashes of plural opinions. To construct a world it is necessary that it is constructed at the same time between subjects. Nick Crossley (1996), for instance, claims that intersubjectivity itself constitutes a world, or more precisely, inter-world. In this inter-world intersubjectivity is possible when subjects are trying to tune in their act while sharing the same spatial and temporal horizon.

On the Net, however, demonstrating the power of the masses can be temporally and spatially unsynchronised. Every actor is capable of taking part in collective action at the preferred moment from whatever spot that has Internet access.

The transformational potentiality of the Net with regard to collective action and influence could be described as revolutionary. Earlier, collective activity was characterised by action that happens intersubjectively in shared space and partakers were by definition consociated contemporaries. Being not physically there, but acting at a distance through the Net co-presently, empowers such collective action that may consist of a single act done by atomistic individuals throughout the world (Zhao 2004, 96). It is no longer necessary to share the same place to utilise collective pressuring, or employ the power of the masses (as virtual sit-ins, e-attacks and the like so clearly demonstrate). Still, activities of that kind require very precise temporal synchronising to be at their most efficient. Yet, temporal flexibility expands in some other forms of net-politics. In campaigns, such as the Lordi-protest highlighted earlier, consciousness of the present now is not necessarily the objective now for all participants of collective action. The awareness of the now's temporal being, that is grasping the enduring present now as a temporal object that exists in time, could be different for each participant due to the virtual nature of the sphere of activity which is accessible from every subject's own temporal horizon. The participation takes place from the standpoint of a myriad of different present-nows because virtual time is beyond objective time, and the now-moments are asymmetrical in respect of the objective real-world's nows. A message could be sent to an on-line forum or chat-room, and it may receive an almost immediate response, or the response is given after a long delay. Yet, all replies and responses are, in combo, constructing a reciprocal sense of sharing the same place and doing something together. On-line-discussions constitute a world between subjects in cyber-space and constructed virtual space in which intersubjectivity<sup>9</sup> may emerge regardless of the limitations of being in the here-and now (cf. Zhao 2006, 462-463).

9. The nature of Net facilitated intersubjectivity and co-presence in cyberspace is, in some commentaries, regarded as being something more or less imperfect, compared to co-presence in the real, physical world. According to Zhao virtual co-presence (or tele-co-presence as he calls the phenomenon) is mediated and thus truncated



## CONCLUSION

In current political arenas the role of the Internet is crucial. Various uses of the Internet facilitate different civic and individually organized networks and help to introduce their aims and strategies, and to outreach target groups and members of the public. Also it is more efficient to run the core tasks of campaigning projects, such as communicating with supporters, coordinating events in the field, organising crowds in fast-breaking situations, reacting quickly to breaking news, and gaining publicity for their issue. User friendly applications offer efficient tools for horizontal interaction and carry out a variety of forms of reflexive politics. The traditional publicity of the mass media is easily replaceable by self-produced publicness from the grass-roots-level. From a de-medialised point of view, issues may be approached just in the form in which message senders want. The effectiveness of the Internet is based on its' potential to empower that horizontal communication between individual and different groups (Dahlgren 2005, 155). Everyone with access to the Internet may try to participate in public discussions and shape their agendas on on-line forums.

The Lordi-campaign is an exemplary case of the reflexive re-invention of politics and the political that took gossip journalism as its target. Protest emerged on the Internet around the self-organised network which consisted of separate individual actors. The network adopted such actionist tactics that by right could be called individualised innovative resistance. The network's actionist repertoire include public appeals, boycotts, buycotts, sharing and publishing information online and on websites, the gathering of action networks, and pressurising the employees and commercial partners of the magazine by a massive avalanche of emails. Also culture jamming was playing a rather visible role in the network's actions (virtual sit-ins, turning magazines upside-down in the selling stands and sending photos of these events to Internet-galleries). *7 Days*-magazine held virtual takeovers and put pressure on the protestors by claiming that they

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(Zhao 2004: 96; see also Williams (2006). For an alternative reading concerning the nature of virtual presence, see Marion Hamm (2005). Unfortunately, in this chapter it is not possible to analyse these various concepts regarding virtual co-presence (being on-line) and its' relationship to 'real-worldly' (being off-line) counterparts.

were committing criminal activities, but no police investigation, nor legal processes followed from these acts (see Digitoday 31.5.2006; Digitoday 30.5.2006a).

From the perspective of reflexive politics, conflicts spring up from the problematic relation between an individual and society. This is partly caused by a societal and global development, the shift from communal life to private life in which the sense of shared community, imagined belonging to a bigger whole, is profoundly changing the scope of the political (see Johnston & Larána & Gusfield 1994; Beck 1995; Polletta & Jasper 2001; Bernstein 2005; McDonald 2006). As pointed out earlier, there are no single dominant or objective cleavages causing the political conflicts, rather conflicts arise from clashes of different subjective values, lifestyles and attitudes. Reflexive politics puts emphasis on the mobilisation process fostering the emergence of new ideas, world-views, and particularly the adaptation of political activity and participation to change conditions (Diani & Eyerman 1992, 7-8).

Self-made publicness strengthens the core idea of reflexive political action, in which the significance of do-it-yourself culture is as crucial as the resistance to centralised ways of doing politics. It emphasises activities that take place in open, anti-hierarchical, free spaces. One characteristic feature in reflexive organisation and mobilisation is swarming. Horizontally communicating jungle drumming attracts people to visit interesting websites or hubs. This multitude of individuals may grow into a politically effective force if they unite in one or more respect. In other words they manage, at least temporarily, to transform people from different backgrounds into a unified collective agent. By meshworking the swarming effect turns the plural into unity. All that is familiar from a Hobbesian standpoint, but in this age people do not unite in order to safeguard their miserable lives, but instead to express themselves freely, if they have found one or more interests in common worth taking action over. (cf. Osterweil 2004, 501, 504.) The horizontal nature of the Internet's participation and action culture is far more democratic than traditional forms of government. In free net participation at a micro-level and activities occurring in cyberspace all participants are, by definition, equal; they share the same amount of power regardless of their position in the "real world" and all they

can trust in is the power of their arguments or the tempting nature of their agenda.

The extended present, in respect of intersubjectivity and facilitated happenings on the Net, has direct effects on the nature of action and on the styles it can adopt, as well as the outcomes of net-activism. The asymmetry in time-levels between the real world and virtual spaces enables that these different temporal zones might overlap; i.e. exist simultaneously at the level of subjective time experience. Consequently, that could cause latency in the efficacy of the action; the acts emerging now might change the course of events after a (long) while. In addition, this blurred temporality, especially the extended present on the Net empowers single actors by giving them a potentiality and tools to reflect on and to alter the course of their action, just as single acts. To a certain extent, it is possible to go back in time on the Net, for instance to react to, or even change earlier remarks on on-line-forums and chat-rooms. As the case of the Lordi-protest shows, several asymmetric acts could create an exponentially accumulated collective action around the issue that was held to be controversial. In this case, individualized collective actors constructed in a temporal sense, an unsynchronised collective action employing the means and styles of political consumerism and had an impact on the course of events in the real physical world.

Transformative change in organising political activities is salient and ostensible in Internet politics, because the Net is regarded as a powerful tool to gather coalitions and organise mobilisation of any kind (Chadwick 2006; Dahlgren 2005; Meikle 2002). Communicative puttering on the Net may arouse peoples' interest toward acute political and social problems and may cause political involvement and may even lead to action. Through the Net, this is especially convenient; at the minimum level all you have to do is click your mouse. Googling, blogging, maintaining websites, Net downloading and uploading, producing the material on the Net, mobilising people to take action about something, and net-petitions have become more and more visible and notable forms of political participation (Micheletti 2006). All the activities surrounding the Lordi-protest are not bound to remain a single atomistic by-plot within the story of political influence, but rather show the direction where civic participation and political activism is

heading. The innovative Lordi-protest indicates that de-medialised publicness is increasingly crucial for the politicisation of various topics of political consumerism.

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